

People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

■ VOLUME 36 ISSUE 20

■ MUMBAI

■ OCTOBER 25 - NOVEMBER 09, 2023

■ ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION ₹. 100/-

FOR SAUDI ARABIA THE CHINA-BROKERED DEAL IS A PRAGMATIC SECURITY CHOICE THAT GOES BEYOND HEDGING AND BALANCING AGAINST WASHINGTON—ESPECIALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT.

—NEWS



World Council of Churches

Call for immediate ceasefire, and urgent humanitarian aid for Gaza

"We are deeply concerned about the conflict between Israel and Palestinian armed groups, and of the inevitably tragic consequences for the people of the region – Israelis and Palestinians alike – following a period of escalating tensions and violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem."



Windows in Shejaiya, a neighborhood of Gaza City that was hard hit by the Israeli military during the 2014 war. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth

More than 1.1 million Palestinians are struggling to flee from areas of north Gaza targeted by the Israeli military ahead of an expected land offensive a week after Hamas's bloody attack into Israel.

"The World Council of Churches (WCC) appeals once again urgently for an immediate cessation of this deadly violence, and for Hamas to cease their attacks. We urgently ask both parties for de-escalation of the situation," said WCC General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr

Jerry Pillay. "We are deeply concerned about the conflict between Israel and Palestinian armed groups, and of the inevitably tragic consequences for the people of the region – Israelis and Palestinians alike – following a period of escalating tensions and violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem."

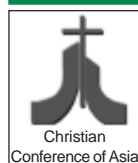
The World Council of Churches joined the statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem issued on 13 October, which urged immediate actions to address the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The situation at the Gaza strip is unbearable without access to water, food, medical support, and electricity.

Rev. Dr. Pillay said in a statement "We call upon the State of Israel with the support of the international community, to allow humanitarian support to enter Gaza so millions of innocent civilians, including many children, may receive medical treatment and basic supplies."

Rev. Dr. Pillay underlined the urgent need to act. "Moreover, we call on all parties to de-escalate this war in order to save innocent lives while serving the cause of justice."

Rev. Dr. Pillay called on respect for international law—including the Geneva Convention—international humanitarian law, and human rights to be respected and upheld to protect all civilians and for the immediate release of all hostages held in Gaza. He concluded: "We call on all leaders to work for just peace in the Holy Land. Only justice will lead to peace, safety, and security for all."

— WCC News



15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia



'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'

General Assembly elects new Executive Committee and Officers for next quinquennium

The 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was held at Kottayam, India, from 28 Sept. to 3 October 2023.

Three new Officers and a 17-member Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia for the next quinquennium were elected unanimously on the fifth day of the 15th General Assembly.

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza (Moderator), Dr (Ms) Anna Anisha Mathew Simon (Vice Moderator), and Rev. Chan Kwok-Keung (Treasurer) will be the three new officers. The four-member CCA Officers' team will include the General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara who is currently serving a second term.

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines was a member of the Executive Committee of CCA since the Jakarta Assembly and subsequently served as the Acting Vice Moderator of CCA since December 2022.

— CCA News

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Conquering Moon But Impoverishing People!

In the month of September this year, India's pride rose to envious heights because of two achievements : One, she became the fourth country in the world that achieved the safe- landing of a space craft in the Moon; and two, she conducted G-20 Summit in Delhi with unprecedented splendour to the envy of the world leaders. As per the estimates of some media, India spent nearly Rs. 5000 crore for the meetings of G-20 - more than forty times the expenditure incurred by Indonesia last year.

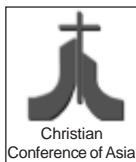
While the leadership of India is being in a celebrating mood still by the 'two successes' referred to above, the release of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) - 2023 has forced India to hang her head down in shame. As per this report, India's rank is 111 out of the 125 countries in the world! The GHI score of 28.7 puts India in the category of "Serious Hunger". The GHI score is based on a formula which considers four indicators – Under-Nourishment, Child-Stunting, Child-Wasting and Child-Mortality that together capture multi-dimentional nature of hunger.

Unfortunately, the media concealed this report, and there is no discussion about this terribly disturbing paradox in the performance of the nation. Our success in the Chandrayan Project and the conduct of G-20 Summit shows that there is no dearth of resources in this country. Along with this, we have to add billions of rupees being spent by the Governments at the State and Central levels for erecting tall statues, rebuilding the Parliament Complex and such other projects on the one hand and trillions of rupees being spent by non- governmental agencies for building Temples, Mosques and Churches across the country, on the other. It is when the Governments and the civil society spent trillions of rupees for these projects aimed at boosting esteem, India's rank in the GHI is awfully shameful. It must be noted that Afghanistan, Haiti and 12 Sub-Saharan countries are the only 14 countries behind India and that the ranks of even Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal are above that of India.

We have more than enough resources to elevate India's GHI from 111 to 50 or above. But, the very disturbing problem is that our leadership is not at all concerned about it. The problem is about the objectives and priorities of the nation. We must be proud of our achievements in space-craft technology and many other areas. At the same time, we have to remember that developed countries like Japan, Germany, Australia, England, South Korea and Canada give priority for improving the well-being of the people, and keep away from competition in the areas for which we give priority. By stating this we do not suggest that India should stop spending money for developing space-craft technology. The provisioning for the sustenance of the people ought to be the top-most priority of any civilised society. Making hundreds of other achievements by abandoning this, will be shameful and suicidal. We can improve our GHI by diverting 10% of the expenses we have been incurring for the non-priority projects referred to above. "Keeping proper balance between expenses for bread and battleships" is an old norm for the exchequer!

Thought for the Fortnight

*"Contentment is natural wealth,
luxury is artificial poverty."*
– Socrates



15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia



'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'

Vision and Passion for Ecumenism

Mathews George Chunakara

"We need to recover our vision and passion for ecumenism, discerning in the depth of our faith. We need to recognize that as members of the Asian ecumenical fraternity, we must grow and progress in the quest for accepting the growing reality of our common belonging and our being in Christ. Let us keep traveling to reach the goal of our common witness in unity".

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara delivered the opening address at the CCA General Assembly. Excerpts from the text of the address.

As Diakonia is central to what it means to be the church and fulfilling the church's mission and witness as servants, and Diakonia is a core component of the gospel, which is not an optional, but an essential part of discipleship, prophetic witness and advocacy emerged as a primary concern of CCA. So, the CCA affirmed that Diakonia is a gift of the Holy Spirit and a manifestation of practical love for human beings.

While initiating and organizing the programmes, CCA has been conscious of the fact that in a situation where the world is becoming more broken, where the sin of injustice abounds, God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit calls the church to gather God's people of communities. It was in these contexts that advocacy on initiating churches' response to militarization, nuclearization, and arms race in Asia, eco-justice for sustainable peace, regional and



Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA delivers the opening address

global advocacy, human rights in Asia, and ecumenical advocacy at the UN, rights of migrant workers, human trafficking and statelessness, marginalization of indigenous and vulnerable communities, upholding the rights and dignity of children, and health and healing, Disability Advocacy Network, Ecumenical Solidarity Accompaniment, and Ecumenical Diakonia in Asia also were priority programmes and activities of CCA from 2016 to 2023. The special programme Action Together in Combating HIV and AIDS (ATCHA) to deal with and equip churches to

Combat HIV and AIDS was continued with expanded programmes and activities and with enhanced human resources. In order to address the increasing menace by Asian churches, a strategic approach was initiated in enhancing the capacities of the CCA network in the areas of advocacy, self-assessment of churches' inclusiveness by using appreciative inquiry methods, exchange of learning and sharing of resources within CCA and inter-faith networks, motivating youth as change agents, specific advocacy related to prevention, care, support, and treatment to global and concerned organisations, development agencies, and government, strengthening regional and national interfaith networks for the exchange of learning, expertise through the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA) with focus on interfaith advocacy and encouraging mutual support within faith-based communities and organisations in Asia, etc., were initiated during the past eight years.



Installation of the newly elected Executive Committee of the CCA (2023-2028) at the closing worship and Holy Eucharistic Service in the 15th General Assembly; Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church, 3 October 2023

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Annual Subscription

For Individuals ₹. 100/-; For Institutions ₹. 250/-

Please Send Subscriptions, All Editorial And Business Correspondence To:

Prof. Dr. Mammen Varkey,
Editor in Chief, People's Reporter,
Valiyapurayidam, East Fort,
Post Box No.12,

Mavelikara - 690 101, Kerala, India

Phone : 09446916374, 0479 - 2304355

E-mail : prprtr@gmail.com, mammenvarkey@gmail.com



Christian Conference of Asia

15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia



'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'

Jerry Pillay

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, delivered the keynote address on the theme of the Assembly, "God, Renew Us in Your Spirit, and Restore the Creation".

Excerpts from the keynote address

1. Introduction:

The Signs of the Time

We are living in difficult times. The world is in crisis. Our current global context has been described as a "polycrisis". Multiple threats of accelerating climate change, COVID-19 and its impacts, conflicts, ethnic and gender-based violence, war, displacements, hunger and food insecurity, rising inequality and marginalization add to the complexities and sufferings in the world.

It is obvious today, as Apostle Paul describes in Romans 8:22-24, "the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains". Today, the existential threat is global and it threatens the integrity of life on earth. The world is facing multiple shocks — geopolitical, related to energy, economics, and a climate emergency. Yet, the political establishments are marked by an inability or unwillingness to address these multidimensional and complex challenges.

Rising global temperatures with global mean temperatures for the past 8 years have been the highest on record, fueling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism. Forest fires are becoming more widespread. Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, and oceans are acidifying. The number of weather-related disasters has increased by a factor of five over 50 years.

The Global North is responsible for 92% of the excess historical emissions. The lack of willingness to share resources and to own up the damage of excessive consumption by the rich, is not only a huge problem between the wealthier and less wealthy nations. It is the reality within each

It is obvious today, as Apostle Paul describes in Romans 8:22-24, "the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains". Today, the existential threat is global and it threatens the integrity of life on earth. The world is facing multiple shocks — geopolitical, related to energy, economics, and a climate emergency. Yet, the political establishments are marked by an inability or unwillingness to address these multidimensional and complex challenges.

society. The war in Ukraine has displaced 12.8 million people within Ukraine and to other countries, which adds to the more than 100 million people (1 in every 78 people on earth) who are forcibly displaced—the highest number ever recorded since World War II. The global public debt has been rising over the last six decades and has now reached its highest levels. We live in a world where interest rates are raised to bring down rapidly rising inflation, which has little effect on lowering food prices. **828 million people go to bed hungry every night, and 3.1 billion people (nearly 40 % of the world's population) cannot afford a healthy diet daily. Only a holistic and transformative response to these crises, which will even overwhelm the political and societal impediments, can give us respite from these existential challenges.**

2. An Ecumenical Response

As churches and ecumenical movements and regions, we are called to respond to these global challenges, especially the climate crisis. The WCC Assembly held in New Delhi in 1961 reinterpreted creation and redemption in a cosmic-key giving rise to the Faith and Order study on "God in nature and history." Taking this further, the Vancouver Assembly in 1983 called churches to make a common commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. The Canberra



Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay is the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

Assembly of the WCC in 1991 met under the theme, "Come, Holy Spirit — Renew the Whole Creation". Subsequently, the WCC has continued its work on justice, peace and integrity of creation in its work on eco-justice.

The 11th Assembly of the WCC highlighted the climate emergency as a significant priority for the Council to engage and act on. In fact, it considers the climate crisis so urgent that it called for the establishment of a Commission on Climate Change and Sustainable development.

I am so pleased that creation is included in the theme of this Assembly. It shows that you, too, consider this to be a critical global concern and crisis. Your theme: **God, Renew Us in Your Spirit, and Restore the Creation expresses some important points that we must not lose sight of. The theme reflects a**

prayer to God, the source of our help and strength to overcome our challenges. It categorically states that our trust and hope is in God who is our deliverer and sustainer. The theme is reflected as a prayer to God who lives and reigns in the world in spite of all its evil, corruption, oppression, conflicts, greed and sin. It is a prayer that God will make the church and Christians to be what God wants and wills for us to be, and that God will use us to change the world so that it may reflect God's reign and presence bringing justice, peace, love and abundance of life to all.

The words "renew" and "restore" imply that we have lost something, and that we should go back to what we should be, to begin or take up again, to restore to a former state, to replenish, revive or re-establish, to make new. It is the first step to real transformation. In many senses, the church has lost, neglected, forgotten and forsaken its calling. We are called to proclaim the good news of salvation and life in Jesus Christ but we have become side-tracked from our main purpose as church.

The "us" in the theme is a reference to both the church and the world. We recognise that the church is in much need of renewal and transformation in as much as the world with all its injustices, corruption, deceit and unrighteousness. **We thus need to speak to ourselves:** First before we can tell the world what

to do or not to do. In some senses the church is a microcosm of the world rather than being a bridgehead to an alternative world filled with justice, peace and fullness of life for all (John 10:10). **The prayer is a plea and cry to God to renew us and to restore creation. Creation is suffering!**

While some of us may perceive climate crisis to be important for us to focus on as Christians, yet many others do not. They also cite Biblical reasons for their position. Perhaps, the most important argument they make is that protecting nature is not the central task of the Church. They establish that spiritual tasks such as evangelization are more important than creation care. Proclaiming the salvation of Christ to the world is the mission of the church. They believe that human beings are more important than nature. Helping a starving person or an exploited person seems more important than fair trade coffee. They are more interested in local matters rather than in global issues. Further, they believe that God will take care of God's creation and, therefore, they need not worry about this. God will not allow his creation to be destroyed by humans. God will sustain the world (Gen. 8:22).

Closely related to trust in God is the eschatological view that the present world will pass away and God will create a new world. This view diminishes the focus on creation-care and gives tendency to deny the climate crisis that is already upon us. Sadly, this includes many Christians as well.

Having outlined some of the views that do not give priority to climate crisis, I attempt three things: 1) Show from a theological perspective why Christians must take the climate crisis seriously, 2) Ask how we can help restore creation and 3) Examine the role of the Church in addressing the same.

As we pray to God to "Renew us in your spirit and restore creation", we need to know exactly for what we are praying.

828 million people go to bed hungry every night, and 3.1 billion people (nearly 40 % of the world's population) cannot afford a healthy diet daily. Only a holistic and transformative response to these crises, which will even overwhelm the political and societal impediments, can give us respite from these existential challenges.



**Without I and U,
SOIL and SOUL are just
SULLIED!**

To be continued



15th General Assembly Christian Conference of Asia

'God, Restore Us in Your Spirit And Renew the Creation'



Strengthen the profile of churches as actors for eco-social transformation

Dietrich Werner

Excerpts from the paper presented at a 15th CCA Assembly Pre-Consultation held at Kottayam, India, on 26 September 2023

1) Commemorating 175 years of organized Diaconia in Germany

– an occasion for learning lessons regarding a strong connectivity between Churches and Diaconia

This year, 2023, is a special year for us in Germany. Protestant churches are celebrating a particular jubilee. We are commemorating 175 years of organized Christian social work and diaconia.

A special campaign under the slogan "Out of Love: Diaconia"² has been created and a number of highly interesting resources are made available to commemorate the impact of the famous 1848 Wittenberg speech of Johann Hinrich Wichern, founder of Protestant Diaconia in Germany. During that national convention of protestant churches he had criticised churches for their failure to address together the needs of the impoverished urban masses resulting from rapid industrialization and the Napoleon wars in the first half of the 19th century.³ His strategic recommendation was to form a national platform and joint committee of organized social care of all regional churches. Once established in that same year⁴ this laid the basis for a strong connectivity between regional churches and Diaconia in Germany during subsequent decades. The key conviction was: Diaconia, i.e. social Christian work (including individual acts of mercy and care as well as advocacy for those disadvantaged and prophetic denunciation of unjust structures in society), is an essential dimension of the church at all of its social levels– the local, the regional, the national, the global. Diaconia is and remains the other, the second language and face of Christian faith in society. Beside the *language of the word of God*, i.e. the word of unconditional love being preached and shared during

Diaconia, i.e. social Christian work (including individual acts of mercy and care as well as advocacy for those disadvantaged, and prophetic denunciation of unjust structures in society), is an essential dimension of the church at all of its social levels– the local, the regional, the national, the global. Diaconia is and remains the other, the second language and face of Christian faith in society.

worship, it is the practical language of love, the *language of deeds of mercy, love and justice* which touches human lives, particularly of the wounded ones, the fragile, the suffering. **Sometimes deeds of love, mercy and justice can reach human heart even more forcefully than just words of love. Diaconia therefore is an essential ingredient in the credibility and for integral witness of the Christian Church. No church is too small and too weak not to embody some forms of social witness and human service. No local Christian community is incapable to develop some forms of mutual caring for each other.**

Apart from this first learning lesson - diaconia being an indispensable second language of faith, German churches also encountered three other learning lessons in their history:

a) First: Receiving diaconal aid often goes together with giving diaconal aid. There is an important dynamic and *relationship between giving and receiving*. The relationship between receiving and giving was also quite important for the German churches in their history. After the end of the Second World War, German churches had received very generous and unexpected help for reconstruction in Europe and for coping with millions of war refugees from churches in Britain, France and America. Having received so much unexpected help - and also forgiveness - moved German Christians very much and allowed them to become part of the international ecumenical



Rev. Prof. Dr. Dietrich Werner, from Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Northern Germany has been the head of the unit in Bread for the World, Berlin, for theological, ecumenical and conceptual work from 2014 - 2023, now retired. He is a former Director of Theological Education program in the World Council of Churches (ETE 2007-2014); a former Director at Missions Academy of the University of Hamburg. He was a member of the international working group on Ecumenical Diaconia of the World Council of Churches and ACT Alliance and member of the preparatory group for the Ecumenical Conversation on Ecumenical Diaconia during the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

community again after 1948. It was out of the gratitude for the received ecumenical diaconia from other churches that Bread for the World was founded in 1959, the key-arm and international instrument to give ecumenical assistance and help to other churches around the world.⁵

b) The second learning lesson: It is good to have common collaboration of all churches on a national level to empower churches for diaconia and to overcome too narrowminded local or regional agendas. This is why a national platform for diaconia was formed already early (Diakonia Germany) which in 2012 was merged with the international

wings and instruments for international humanitarian and diaconia work. The Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung (EWDE) since then has its headquarters in Berlin and with its several hundreds of employees can be regarded as the biggest Christian NGO in Europe. It has unfolded its work in 17 regional diaconal agencies and around 33000 specialized services, professional associations for work with drug addicts, professional association for hospice care and association for working with migrants etc.. Protestant diaconia has become a brand name in this part of the world and a strong ally and partner of local churches nationally and internationally with an institutional platform and voice which the government cannot ignore. With its 6,00,000 employed workers and 7,00,000 volunteer staff diaconal agencies still present one of the largest employers in German society and are still operating within the frame work of state-church partnership relations and with partial co-funding of its services rendered for sick people, suffering and needy people by the state within the German welfare system⁶ (conditions which cannot easily be found in other national contexts and which are increasingly also challenged by high competitiveness on the commercialized market by private and secular new service providers for social care). **This leads to a second question for Asian churches as to how best to serve the common good for all people and particularly for marginalized community via**

diaconal services and to work on strategic funding partnership with public and private donors as this is vital for diaconia.

c) The third learning lesson for churches in Germany: There are areas of social evils, children's poverty or sexualized violence and racism, rights of women, where the *diaconia services and witness of the churches have to be bold and prophetic, in order to speak truth to power and to perpetrators*. This is particularly relevant because churches are still mindful of our specific historical context where totalitarian rule and repressive and exclusivist policies of a racist government during the Nazi-period had led to unimaginable destructions in this world and grave violations of human rights. This is what still makes churches in Germany being very vocal and sensitive related to human rights in general as well as to the rights of minorities and to basic democratic principles. This again leads to a third question in the dialogue with our Asian partner churches, namely what does it mean to be bold and prophetic in the social context of Asian churches today which often face harsh conditions in terms of the absence of human rights protection and sufficient free space for civil society.

The Ecumenical diakonia study document of the WCC and the ACT Alliance, is an invitation to give new and fresh expression to the vocation to be part of God's mission to the world while understanding this call (vocation) as advocacy (advocatio) as well as if necessary as provocation (pro-vocatio).

References:

² See: <https://ausliebe.diakonie.de/>

³ See: <https://ausliebe.diakonie.de/#historie>

⁴ See also: <https://www.diakonie.de/innere-mission>

⁵ See also: <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/en/bread-for-the-world/about-us/history/>

⁶ Ingolf Hübner, Christian Social Service in Countries with a Predominantly Christian Tradition and State Church Tradition, in: Godwin Ampony et. al (eds): International Handbook on Ecumenical Diaconia, Regnum Books, Oxford 2021, p. 118-122;

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To be continued

Israel - Palestine Conflict

Raise Voice For A Peaceful Settlement

Varughese George

The Palestine region that was under British mandate was handed over to the United Nations in 1947 and the latter decided to form two states, Israel and Palestine, and to internationalise Jerusalem as per the UN Resolution 181 of 1947.

On the basis of this the State of Israel was formed in 1948 itself, but Palestinians could not establish their State since Israel annexed 77 percent of the land allotted to them. A huge Palestine population without homeland became refugees in seven Arab States. The remaining Palestinians were confined to two small areas, Gaza and West Bank. In December 1948, the UN General Assembly passed the Resolution 194 that called for Israel to allow the refugees to return. It stated that 'refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to return so at the earliest practicable date and that compensation should be paid for the property of those who did not wish to, and for loss or damage of property which under the principles of international law or equity should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible'.

What happened was the opposite! After the 1967 Israel-Arab war, Israel occupied the remaining territories, Gaza and West Bank and about five million Palestinians fled from these regions again creating an exodus of refugees to the Arab countries. Even while remaining as refugees Israel bulldozed

The joint statement issued by the patriarch and bishops after their emergency session meeting in Jerusalem bears the agony of the situation. They said that everything changed in the Holy land. The order to evacuate one million people in North of Gaza will aggravate the humanitarian crisis. Food, water, electricity and medicine are all subjected to blockade and not allowed entry into Gaza.

some of the refugee camps in Shabra and Shantila that the world still remembers with shock and dismay. According to the UN Resolution 242 of 1967, Israel was asked to evacuate from the occupied territories. It also called for the right of self-determination for Palestine people. Though this region had been a theatre of war for long, in successive wars, the victory was with Israel.

The rigorous and determined efforts by the UN to find a permanent solution to the Israel-Palestine issue, resulted in Oslo Accords in 1993 that were supposed to bring about Palestinian self-determination and recognition of each other. The creation of a Palestine authority was its most notable result. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was recognised and elections were held to the Palestine Council and Yassar Arafat became the President. The United Nations granted observer status to Palestine. Arafat and Yizak Rabin, the Presidents of Palestine authority and Israel respectively jointly won the Nobel Prize for peace along with Peres who brokered the Treaty.

But the peace was short lived. The extreme right in Israel did not want to give back the territory and the President of Israel, who signed the accord, died in mysterious circumstances. The



Dr. Varughese George is a National Socialist Activist

Oslo accords slowly died down with continued Israeli occupation, but due to strong international pressure it withdrew its military from Gaza in 2005. But in West bank it encouraged Jewish settlements further lessening space for Palestenians. Thus, the Palestinian peoples' hope for an independent sovereign state remains just a dream.

Meanwhile after the demise of Yassar Arafat, the PLO has lost its sheen and a new militant outfit Hamas gained dominance especially attracting the Palestine youth. Subsequently, they gained victory in elections in Gaza, but Israel refused to accept its authority. Skirmishes were galore, but it was on a limited scale.

But every thing changed since October seventh this year.

The Hamas fired missiles into Israeli territory killing 1200 people, including civilians. About two hundred people are in captivity. This is not acceptable and to be condemned. The Hamas should have anticipated ruthless backlash from Israel, considering the past. That is exactly what is happening. Israel is giving it a shroud of legitimacy among NATO allies pointing out its right to self defense.

Israel declared war on Palestine on the same day and it is on a mission of ethnic cleansing. It is burning cities. The people are on the run. The President of Israel has asked the Palestine people residing in the North Gaza to flee to the South before flushing out the Hamas militants from that region. Thousands have fled. One million people are in exodus. They do not know where to go. Women and children are walking and walking, hungry and weary. The Lord of history may act, we pray. The man-made institutions have failed them including The United Nations. More than three thousand Palestinians are killed so far.

The Arab nations are also hesitant, lest they fear a progressive and democratic Palestine emerging in the midst of the West Asian autocracies. In Gaza on October 17, the largest hospital, Al Ahli, Church was

bombed and three hundred were killed. The Schools were also bombed. More than three thousand Palestine people are killed so far. The World Council of Churches has expressed outrage at the news of the attack on the hospital. "Thousands of Palestinians who had lost their homes already were taking refuge at the hospital, run by the Anglican Church", said. Rev. Jerry Pillay in a statement. **"The attack amounts to collective punishment which is a war crime under international law". He added that the international community must hold Israel responsible for crimes committed against civilians.**

The joint statement issued by the patriarch and bishops after their emergency session meeting in Jerusalem bears the agony of the situation. They said that everything changed in the Holy land. The order to evacuate one million people in North of Gaza will aggravate the humanitarian crisis. Food, water, electricity and medicine are all subjected to blockade and not allowed entry into Gaza, the statement said.

What the international community should do is to raise its voice for an immediate ceasefire, Hamas to free the captives, Israel to end the blockade to Gaza and allow transport of food, medicine and water, facilitate the return of refugees, allow hospitals to resume functioning and resume talks for a peaceful settlement within the UN resolutions.

The Rev. George Daniel – An Iconic Life –

>>> Contd. from Page 8 Col. 1

his team to go to the remote villages where other organisations had not reached. BUILD was able to construct permanent shelters for the people of Chandrapadi in Nagapattinam. **The project was again a unique one, as this was the only shelter with a separate rain water harvesting tank in every house. Right from the District Collector to the Shelter Co-ordinator of the State of Tamilnadu, visited the project and appreciated it.**

In the year 2005, when the Mumbai floods which devastated the city, BUILD, under Rev. George Daniel's leadership, could take up the relief work through the Self Help Groups initiated under the Jansatta

Abhiyaan. The women of the slums could organize the relief work efficiently.

The BUILD also carried out the relief work during the Bihar floods in the year 2008 by providing ration kits. It managed community kitchens by providing Mid-day meals for the children, women and lactating mothers.

Rev. George Daniel always wanted to do something meaningful for the upliftment of the lowest strata of the society. He was instrumental in making BUILD a part of initiatives for the Homeless. He encouraged the formation of the Homeless Collective, a network of NGOs. This Collective filed a PIL in the year 2010 on behalf of the homeless people, for their identity and shelter. A vast

number of homeless people have been able to get their identity. **BUILD also brought in a publication "Choiceless on the Streets" on the Homeless in Mumbai. This has become a basic document for reference, for the organisations working on the subject.**

COVID 19: When the COVID pandemic engulfed the whole world, BUILD under the leadership of the Rev. George Daniel once again took the lead in reaching relief to the neglected section, the homeless. Dry Ration and Hygiene kits were provided to the homeless families. Also, the volunteers educated the homeless population to take care of their hygiene. In spite of the travel restrictions, during this period,

the inspiration provided by Rev. Daniel, motivated the staff to reach out to the people.

During his tenure as the General Secretary of BUILD, Rev. George Daniel also served as a Presbyter of the St. Mary's Church, Parel.

The list is endless for the man with a vision who accomplished many of his dreams for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Rev. George Daniel departed from this world for his heavenly abode on 11th October 2023. We will be always indebted to him for his selfless contribution to the world.

The life of the Rev. George Daniel was deeply human, deeply holy. His goal was

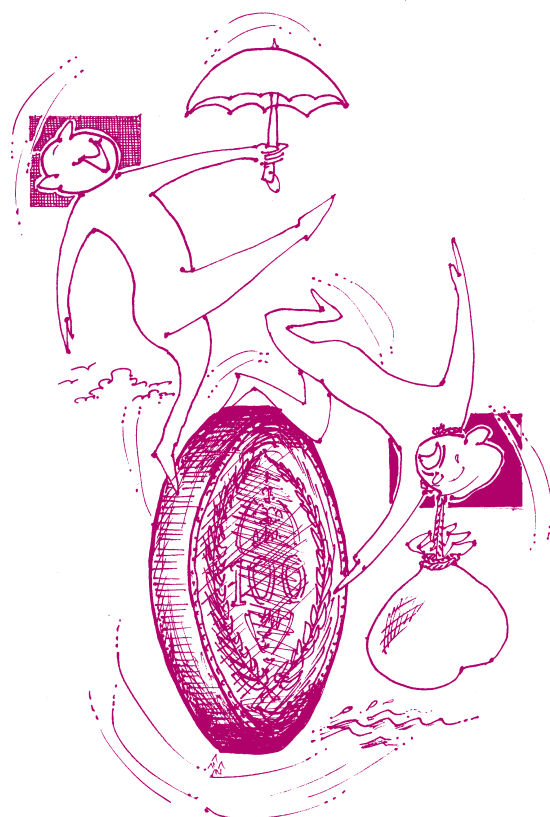
always using human means to deepen spiritual awareness and closeness to God from whom he received his strength and purpose. Life is so ironic. It takes sadness to know happiness. Noise to appreciate silence, and absence to value presence. Not many whose lives were touched and enriched would have heard or seen Rev. George Daniel. But how he made others feel, said a lot about him. He left them with a smile. He too, may not have always seen the results of his kindness but he contributed every bit of his positive energy to the world, to make it a better place to live. May he live long in our hearts. "Well done good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of your Master."

— BUILD Team —

An Ode to Money

Suka Joshua

Money, the answer for many?
Or the evil that makes for merry?
Can you be nice and vice at one go?
Yes you can, that I know.
Can you offer in a platter
My deepest desire to
Make a downright difference?
Then you are my worthy friend.
Can you kindle in me
The clean discipline
To hone my genial gifts?
Then truly a pal you prove.
Can you hammer
The power to wonder
At glory and grandeur
Then you are a herald of honour.
Can you instil love and laughter
And help me nurture care
And strengthen bonds?
You are then an exponent of ethics.
Can you buy memories
To fill my memoire?
And help me value friends?
Then you will be fondly recalled.



Dr. Suka Joshua,
was Associate Professor of English,
at Lady Doak College, Madurai.
She pastors a village church.
She is passionate about girls' education
and women empowerment,
and uses the Gospel
to enlighten people

Just a little more money
Just to be a little more happy
Want me to believe this blatant lie?
Fie! You are then a flagrant foe!

I need a lot more money
To make a lot more happy
Can you fan this flame?
Then I will be your fan forever.



NIFEA Communique

Commit to Achieve

An Inclusive, Gender-Just, Equitable Global Order

The NIFEA
(New International, Financial,
Economic Architecture)
is a collaborative
ecumenical effort
of the World Communion of
Reformed Churches,
World Council of Churches,
Lutheran World Federation,
Methodist World Council and
Council for World Mission.
Members of Communities
including social thinkers,
clergy, theologians, activists
and community leaders
representing social
organizations, ecumenical
institutions and religions
traditions gathered under
the aegis of the NIFEA
at a time when
G-20 Summit was held
in Delhi, India,
on 9 and 10 September 2023.
The NIFEA Gathering
brought out a Communique.
Continuation of
the communique published
on page 5 of the last issue of
the People's Reporter
is given below.

We understand

The South Asian dominant
diaspora which has largely
permeated into the economic
and financial echelons in Asia
and the Global North, has
consistently perpetuated notions
of caste, NIFEA: New

Radical alternatives must be reimagined as an alternative to capitalism, state domination, patriarchy, 'ableism', 'cis-heteronormativity', and all forms of racism and casteism. There have been concerted efforts by the powerful nations to systematically quell protests and resistant people's movements that continue to provide notions of well-being based on post-growth economics and question the injustices against the people and the earth.

International Financial and
Economic Architecture, a
collaborative ecumenical effort
grievously affecting the ideas of
equity in global economic
planning. **Historically
marginalised communities
continue to suffer from patterns
of segregation and notions of
purity and pollution across the
globe. At best, representation
from these communities
remains emblematic and
tokenistic rather than
substantial representation in
economic and financial spaces.**
The current civil society appears
to replicate the dominant power
ideologies within the
intersections of religion, caste,
gender, and ability. The dominant
heteronormative, binary,
cisgender narrative pervades the
vocabularies of caste, gender,
and disability.

The geographic and
economic redrawing of the maps
by the governments, both local
and global, in the fragile eco-
sensitive spaces inhabited by
the Indigenous communities in
connivance with the industry and

the military point to the sheer
human bankruptcy. The
government machinery is
(mis)used in the concerted
incarceration of activists and
dissent and the clamping down
of alternate voices through
draconian military laws.

The sustainable-
development goals remain as
token representations of human
and environmental concerns,
masking the accountability
apparatus's sheer absence. As
more women and transgender
persons speak up and assert
their rights, we witness an
increased backlash against
feminist and women's
organizations and transgender
community globally. We are
witnessing a rollback on women-
centric laws and increased
incidents of sexual harassment
at the workplace. With the use of
increased technology in our
society, we are witnessing more
incidents of cybercrime and
revenge pornography, which has
also impacted the nature of
sexual crimes being perpetuated
against women. The pandemic

has aggravated incidents of
domestic violence, leaving
women survivors of violence and
their children more vulnerable.

The current logic of the built
environment's interaction with
bodies with disabilities exposes
the inherent ableist ideology
embedded in building spaces.
The human-induced climate
change has disproportionately
affected marginal persons with
disabilities who are already
experiencing multiple
vulnerabilities. Efficient, cost-
effective and inclusive solutions
to address climate justice and the
strengthening of the global
economic and financial
mechanisms must abide by the
principle of 'nothing about us
without us'.

We call

Radical alternatives must be
reimagined as an alternative to
capitalism, state domination,
patriarchy, ableism, cis-
heteronormativity, and all forms
of racism and casteism. There
have been concerted efforts by
the powerful nations to

systematically quell protests and
resistant people's movements
that continue to provide notions
of well-being based on post-
growth economics and question
the injustices against the people
and the earth.

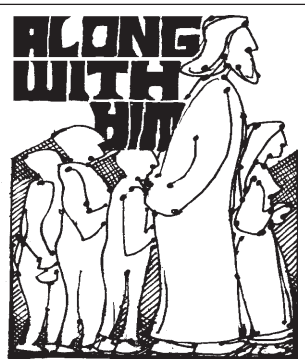
**Resilient and inclusive
community spaces in terms of
the urban and rural built
environment in the context of
climate change are already
taking place in several parts of
the planet.**

Multiple spheres of systemic
alternatives are already present,
from Indigenous ecological
resilience and wisdom, radical
democracy, economic
democracy, culture and
knowledge diversity, social
justice, and well-being.

A theology and ideology of the
commons and labour are
emerging as an alternative
architecture to the development
models paraded as people's
well-being.

**We call upon the G20 to
reiterate its commitment to
achieving an inclusive, gender-
just, equitable global order in
line with the Paris Climate
Agreement, the 2030 Agenda of
the Sustainable Development
Goals, and the Addis Ababa
Action Agenda.**

503



Mammen Varkey

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'He said to him the third time 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, 'Follow me.' " John 21: 15-19.

In our last reflection (Along with Him -502), we deliberated on the call of the Risen Master to Peter, "Feed my lambs" (John 21: 15-RSV) and our inescapable responsibility to re-understand, to understand radically differently, the mission of the 'Kingdom of God' – especially the word 'kingdom'.

It is very commonly understood in a worldly context where people have had opportunity of knowing about present and past kingdoms. A

radical re-understanding of 'the kingdom of the Parent God', calls us to embrace the mission that is entrusted to the disciples, the followers, of all times, of the Risen Master.

Jesus asked his beloved disciple Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" And Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." John 21:15. Yet, Jesus asked this question to Peter thrice! It should not go unnoticed. The reason why the

Risen Lord asked this question thrice to his beloved Peter is revealed from the nature, tone and language of the answer. Jesus understood that his disciple was not unequivocally, unquestionably convinced of the nature of the mission that he was trying to entrust his beloved disciple with.

According to John, the Gospel – writer, what was the revelation about Jesus to Peter. "One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found the Messiah (which means Christ). He brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said "so you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas " (which means Peter) ". John 1: 41 & 42 (RSV). So Peter's first, and so foundational, understanding was that Jesus was the Christ. Then as we saw in the last reflection, Nathanael declared to the followers of Jesus, "You are the son of God! You are the king of Israel!" John 1:49 (RSV). Then what did happen for Peter to be doubtful about Jesus to deny him and even to say that he did not know Jesus? And to doubt about the 'Kingly' nature of Jesus and his mission?

Inauguration Of A New Way – 8

"Thy Kingdom Come"

The final call of the Risen Christ, inescapably, unavoidably, demands us, his followers, believers of all times to re-discover, re-formulate our understanding of 'the kingdom'. How did Jesus begin his ministry? How did the Gospel-writers record it? ".....he went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease " Matt. 4: 23. According to Mark, "Now after John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14 & 15. According to Luke, "And when it was day, he departed and went into a lonely place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." Luke 4:42 & 43. So the Gospels are proclaiming that Jesus came for the establishment of the kingdom of God. But what the disciples who had gone for fishing, leaving the mission given to them of 'fishing of men',

for which they had been chosen, found was that their Risen Master himself was hungry. And he himself served food for his hungry disciples. They must have found it extremely difficult to connect this ministry of feeding the hungry with their understanding of the ministry for the establishment of 'the kingdom of God' and serving the 'king' as his ministers.

Most importantly, what did Jesus himself teach us to pray? "He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples. "And he said to them, "When you pray, say "..... Thy kingdom come...." So our Lord Jesus himself taught us to pray for the coming of "Thy Kingdom..." It, then, becomes our inalienable responsibility to work for the coming, the establishment of 'the kingdom of God', of our Parent. So it becomes vitally important in our faith-journey how we understand 'the kingdom of God' and how we join with our Parent God for its coming.

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

The Difference In Perspectives

A. V. Itty

Lk. 6:39-45

"How can you say to your brother: please, brother, let me take that speck out of your eye; yet cannot even see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (v. 42).

A woman looked out through the window of her house and told her husband: "See, the people who have recently come to live next door, have no cleanliness! See the washed clothes they have hung out? They are as dirty as before washing!" The next day she was impressed by the cleanliness of the washed clothes that were hung out and said: "It is not as I thought. The clothes are all clean and white!" Her husband said with a smile:

Dear, yesterday you looked through a dirty window pane full of dross and dust. Today I cleaned the window pane. It was the fault of our window pane and your point of view. The

clothes they washed yesterday were as clean as today's!"

Often we view others through the eyes of ours, that are full of filth and drab. Our view becomes faulty often due to the dirt in our minds. But we are not willing to accept the fault of our eyes or the error of our gaze! This difference in the perspective depends upon our mentality. We often do not take the pain to ascertain the veracity of the situation we come across. We



should be able to see things as they are. Then only our perspective will become sound and proper!

Some people see only the mistakes in others. They talk only about the deficiencies. They will only see the speck on a beautiful and elegantly painted wall. It is a problem of perspective. Who are there without any deficiencies and blemishes? There could be traits of goodness even in a wicked person. There could be



Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)

certain inadequacies even in good people. We should be at least not going after the specks in other people's eyes, when there is a log in our own eye. May God help us.

Food For Thought:

When we remove the log in our eyes, we will be able to see clearly the speck in the other person's eye and to help them to remove it!



Never allow
ASSAULTERS
to
ALTER
you to
ASSES!

The Rev. George Daniel Passes Away



The Rev. George Daniel

2 November 1957 - 11 October 2023

The family of the People's Reporter expresses its deep sorrow and its heartfelt condolences

The Rev. George Daniel – An Iconic Life –

The Rev. George Daniel, General Secretary of the Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development (BUILD) passed away at Mumbai on 11 October 2023.

Rev. George Daniel was born on 2 November 1957. Rev. George Daniel, fondly called Bobby, the youngest of the three sons of late Mr. A. I. Daniel and Mrs. Grace Daniel of Arippanethu Family, residing at Changanacherry, Kerala, completed his graduation in English Language and Literature in 1979 from the University of Kerala, his Bachelor of Divinity course in 1987 from the United Theological College, Bangalore, and Master of Theology course from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, South Korea.

From 2000 till his death the Rev. George Daniel served as the General Secretary of **Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development (BUILD)** where he initiated various meaningful programmes.

In the year 2001, the Gujarat Earthquake devastated the Bhuj region. Rev. George Daniel, encouraged the team members of the BUILD to take up relief and rehabilitation work in the Maliya Miyana region of Morbi district which is about 200 kms. from Ahmedabad with no proper roads to reach. The Maliya Miyana community was a totally neglected population. The initial intervention was to provide food and medical help to the people and also temporary shelters. In all, BUILD could rehabilitate five villages in this district.

In the year 2001, BUILD under the leadership of Rev. George Daniel, also could help the Gujarat riots victims, by providing immediate relief to more than 1000 people.

Rev. George Daniel passionately started a Community Development Programme for the slum people of Mumbai, which was a wholistic development model. It focussed on the women, the living conditions in the slums, education of the children, livelihood, environment and empowerment. It was a unique programme in every sense, and it was termed as **Jansatta Abhiyan**. The programme focused on having a parallel body to the local government, to keep a check on them. The Municipal authorities were very supportive of this unique programme. The authorities extended all possible help, which led to the formation of more than 120 Self Help Groups (SHGs) each with a separate Bank Account. Some of the women from the groups had never stepped inside the Bank and this was their first opportunity to do so. With the help of the local Government a number of Livelihood Programmes were also initiated, tailoring, catering, grocery, bridal and beautician facilities etc.

The programme won a Corporate Award in Social Innovation in the year 2011, for the best Governance model.

In the year 2004 when the Tsunami struck the Southern part of India, that very day, Rev. George Daniel, sent his team from Mumbai. The BUILD was able to actively involve itself in the relief operations. Initially, temporary shelters were built in 5 villages and basic necessities were provided to the villagers. The intervention went on for a couple of years. Rev. George Daniel always encouraged

Contd. Page 5 Col. 1 ...>>>

CHEER CHAT

There are three levels
of happiness:
The pleasant life
The good life
And
The meaningful life

– Joel Garreau



OIKOTREE

Justice at the heart of faith

www.oikotree.net

“End War – Establish Peace”

OIKOTREE advocates for an end to the unlawful occupation of Palestinian territories and the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements. The establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state, alongside a secure Israel, is indispensable for long-term peace and stability in the region. This must be pursued through negotiations rooted in pertinent United Nations resolutions and international law.

As global observers witness the protracted violence and suffering endured by the populations of Palestine and Israel in the ongoing conflict, it is imperative that we address the pressing need for justice and peace in the region. The situation demands a thorough and equitable resolution that upholds the rights, aspirations, and security of both Palestinian and Israeli communities.

Foremost, OIKOTREE underscores the supreme importance of recognizing the intrinsic value and dignity of every individual embroiled in this conflict. All parties must adhere to and safeguard the lives, rights, dignity, and liberties of individuals, in accordance with international human rights law.

OIKOTREE unequivocally condemns all manifestations of violence, including acts of terrorism targeting innocent civilians, as well as the disproportionate use of weapon force. The senseless loss of life and suffering borne by both Palestinian and Israeli civilians must cease immediately, as it perpetuates an unending cycle of violence.

OIKOTREE urges both Palestine and Israel to engage in substantive dialogue and negotiations to forge an equitable, inclusive, and enduring resolution. The journey towards peace mandates a dedication to dialogue, mutual comprehension, and concession to address the root causes of the conflict. International mediation and assistance should be sought to facilitate these negotiations and ensure impartiality.

OIKOTREE advocates for an end to the unlawful occupation of Palestinian territories and the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements. The establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state, alongside a secure Israel, is indispensable for long-term peace and stability in the region. This must be pursued through negotiations rooted in pertinent United Nations resolutions and international law.

Additionally, OIKOTREE implores all parties to prioritize the observance of human rights, encompassing the freedom of movement, access to education, healthcare, and employment, for all inhabitants of the region. Humanitarian aid and support should not be obstructed, but rather channelled to alleviate the suffering experienced by the affected communities.

In the quest for justice and peace, OIKOTREE calls for international solidarity and assistance. The international community must actively participate in endeavours to reach a resolution that respects the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis. This encompasses endorsing peace-building initiatives, fostering dialogue, and offering humanitarian aid to affected populations.

Ultimately, a just and enduring peace can be achieved only through the commitment of all parties involved. OIKOTREE, as a global community, insists on the cessation of violence and the restoration of justice and peace for all the inhabitants of Palestine and Israel. It is the duty of each of us to support endeavours towards a compre-

hensive and sustainable solution, founded on mutual respect, understanding, and parity.

In solidarity with the conflict victims,

Prof. Dr. Seong-Won Park

Moderator of

OIKOTREE

Global Mobile

+82-10-3039-5703

Email: parkswon@gmail.com

Dr. William Stanley

General Secretary

OIKOTREE

Global Mobile:

+91-9849120377

Email: stanley111@gmail.com

– Oikotree News

People's Reporter

Printed and Published by

Vattukalathil Chacko John

No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial

Estate, Nehru Road,

Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East

Mumbai - 400 055

for and

on behalf of

New Education and Welfare

Service Trust

and

Printed at

Anita Art Printers,

No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial

Estate, Nehru Road,

Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East

Mumbai - 400 055

Ph: 022 - 26652978

and

Published at

No. 29, 30, Oasis Industrial

Estate, Nehru Road,

Vakola Masjid, Santacruz East

Mumbai - 400 055

Editor

Valiyapurayidam

Mammen Varkki

The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the editors.